



Security Council

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Report of the Secretary-General on the humanitarian implications of the measures imposed by Security Council resolutions 1267 (1999) and 1333 (2000) on Afghanistan

I. Introduction

1. In resolution 1333 (2000) of 19 December 2000, the Security Council requested me to report periodically on the humanitarian implications of sanctions against Afghanistan. A first report, covering the first 60 days of sanctions under resolution 1333 (2000) and outlining reporting methodology, was submitted on 20 March 2001 (S/2001/241).

2. The present report is a mid-term review using the same methodology as my previous report. It identifies several adverse conditions that result from the sanctions regime. It concludes however that these effects are limited in comparison to other hardships currently faced by Afghanistan's population. The primary cause of human suffering in Afghanistan is the ongoing conflict, exacerbated substantially by the drought and widespread human rights abuses.

II. Profile of vulnerability

3. The overall vulnerability in Afghanistan is established as a baseline against which the humanitarian implications of the United Nations sanctions can be assessed. The profile of vulnerability includes assessments of the economy, public health, food security and nutrition, population displacement and the extent of the population's reliance on humanitarian assistance for survival.

4. The vulnerability profile indicates that the humanitarian situation in Afghanistan is characterized by:

- (a) Chronic poverty and lack of development;
- (b) An acute food crisis;
- (c) A collapsed economy;
- (d) A high level of dependence on humanitarian assistance.

A. Economic situation

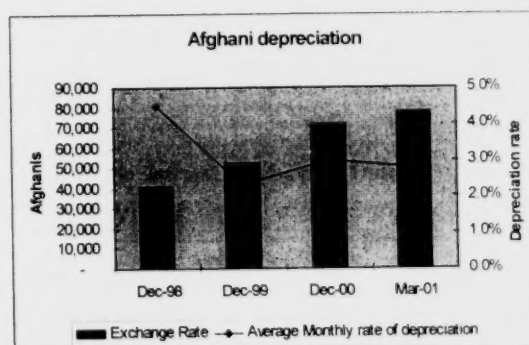
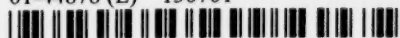


Figure 1

5. Figure 1 shows the depreciation of the Afghani versus the United States dollar in both real and percentage terms. The exchange rate has depreciated over time, leading to chronic local price inflation. There has, however, been no evidence of an actual collapse of the exchange rate or any threat of hyperinflation since the arrival of the Taliban in Kabul in 1996.



6. The labour market shows the clearest indicators of the impact of drought, conflict, deprivation of human rights and mass displacement on the ability of the population to meet its basic needs. Real wages, as measured by the purchasing power of money wages, have declined since 1999. The drought has forced many new people into the labour market and almost 100,000 public sector workers have lost their jobs since 1999. The unemployment rate in Faizabad is 66 per cent, and even prosperous Herat has 36 per cent unemployment.

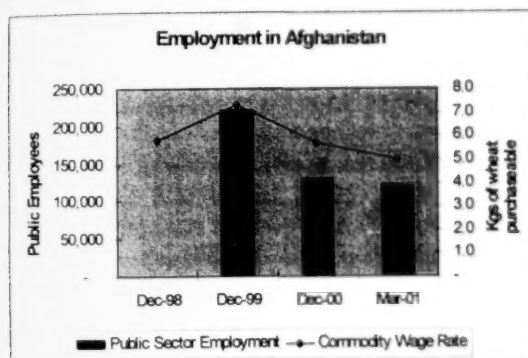


Figure 2

7. Official exports have fallen from \$688 million in 1993, to \$111 million in 2000, and the ongoing drought has prevented the agricultural sector from contributing to export recovery.

8. A large illicit economy developed during the war and official estimates of the level of trade or economic activity are underestimated. Unofficial exports and imports represent the most significant part of Afghanistan's illicit economy. The latest published indicator of the extent of the illicit economy is the estimate of the transit trade (smuggling) to other countries, principally to Pakistan at an estimated value of \$941 million. The most significant recent development in this area has been the enforcement of the ban on opium poppy cultivation. This has drastically reduced the income of farmers and agricultural labourers.

B. Public health situation

9. The public health situation in Afghanistan is critical, with women and children being the most vulnerable. Infant and child mortality rates have remained roughly stable in Afghanistan in a period when other least developed countries have reduced their child mortality rates. A key factor inhibiting progress in public health has been the lack of resources. Only \$2 million from the annual government budget of \$70 million is devoted to health. This means an annual health expenditure of 10 cents per person. In essence, responsibility for health has been left to the individual and humanitarian assistance.

C. Food security and nutrition

10. Food production has collapsed in Afghanistan in the last three years. In 1998, Afghanistan required 1,100,000 metric tons of grain imports; this grew to 2,178,000 metric tons in 2000. This food gap has been partially covered by food aid (167,000 metric tons), and imports from neighbouring countries (364,000 metric tons).

11. Now, in the third year of drought, coping mechanisms are under further stress, in particular as many households have already disposed of their assets. Therefore, acute food insecurity has become the main focus of the international assistance efforts. The latest crop assessment mission, carried out by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the World Food Programme (WFP) in spring 2001, concluded that "there is mounting evidence of emerging widespread famine conditions in the country, reflecting substantially reduced food intakes, collapse of the purchasing power of the people, distress sales of livestock, large-scale depletion of personal assets, soaring food grain prices, rapidly increasing numbers of destitute people and ever-swelling ranks of refugees and internally displaced persons".

D. Population displacement

12. The most visible manifestation of the latest humanitarian crisis in Afghanistan has been the massive increase in population displacement. During 2000 and 2001 displacement occurred in Afghanistan on a scale unseen since the conflicts in Kabul of 1992/93 and 1994/95. The newly displaced have fled

conflict, drought, or deliberate abuses by the authorities (forced displacement). The 850,000 newly displaced represent three times the number seen in 1999. The burden of caring for the displaced people has fallen on host communities and the international assistance agencies.

Displacement: Key indicators

<i>Type of population movement</i>	<i>People</i>
Displaced movement — newly displaced people, since summer 2000	850 000
Newly arrived refugees in Pakistan	170 000
Newly arrived refugees in the Islamic Republic of Iran	200 000
Total repatriations 2001	293 000
Total estimated refugee population in surrounding countries	3 695 000

E. Humanitarian assistance

13. Humanitarian assistance to Afghanistan is currently focused on life-saving interventions. Assistance amounts to more than five times the annual State budget, and essentially provides the only safety net for Afghans. As the drought and conflict continue, it is likely that this dependence will increase as other coping mechanisms are exhausted. In the absence of alternative social safety nets, protection of the ability of international humanitarian agencies to render assistance is key to the welfare of the Afghan population.

III. Causal studies

A. Introduction

14. The causal analysis consists of a series of case studies focusing on specific aspects of the humanitarian situation where there may be an identifiable impact of the sanctions. These case studies are designed to follow the chain of causality to test whether indeed any deterioration in the humanitarian situation has occurred and whether this is attributable to the sanctions regime or to other factors.

B. Humanitarian operating environment

15. The period of sanctions has coincided with a series of adverse changes in the humanitarian operating environment (humanitarian space) in Afghanistan. Humanitarian agencies are concerned about their ability to continue to render assistance given the current trend of events. That this comes at a time of unprecedented humanitarian need in Afghanistan is a source of vital concern.

16. The present report considers the extent to which the reduced humanitarian space has resulted from the response of the Taliban authorities to the imposition of United Nations sanctions.

17. Adverse developments have included legislative acts, negotiating stances adopted by the authorities, changes in administrative procedures, deliberate restriction of access to humanitarian assistance, quasi-legal acts of the Taliban authorities against aid projects and personnel and rhetorical attacks on aid agencies.

18. The highest profile restrictions on the humanitarian space have been the legislative acts, principally Edict 8 of August 2000, which banned Afghan female employment except in the Taliban-controlled health sector. Other examples of legislative action are the order issued in May 2001 to ban females (including female aid agency personnel) from driving automobiles; the restrictions on secular education issued in April 2001; and the proposed application of the Taliban religious code to foreigners. An example of the adverse administrative procedures imposed by the Taliban is the increase in the time required to obtain visas for aid personnel working in Afghanistan, from one week up to four weeks, which has obviously reduced the flexibility and mobility of international staff. Furthermore, since spring 2001, arrests of humanitarian staff by Taliban forces and raids conducted by the religious police on hospitals have increased. The Taliban authorities have also proved to be exceptionally difficult in the negotiations with WFP to reach an agreement on evaluating the needs of the beneficiaries of WFP's Kabul bakery project. Moreover, Taliban authorities continue to deny permission for aid deliveries to opposition-controlled areas, and to restrict polio vaccinations. Additionally, aid project managers have repeatedly been subjected to coercion and abusive behaviour by the Taliban authorities.

19. The majority of these restrictions have been initiated within the official structure of the Taliban movement and at a relatively high level. This indicates some form of official endorsement of the process of restricting the ability of the humanitarian agencies to operate.

20. The humanitarian consequences of the increasingly difficult operating environment include: reduced ability to work with or access women; inability to reach populations that are a low priority for the Taliban authorities; and generally increased costs or difficulty in implementing assistance projects to the extent that otherwise viable projects have to be considered for closure. A continued deterioration of the operating conditions, to the extent where staff security cannot be assured, could ultimately force aid agencies to withdraw and suspend operations.

21. The key factor linking all the major restrictions in the humanitarian operating environment is that they are manifestations of the relationship between the Taliban authorities and the humanitarian agencies. These repeated assaults on humanitarian action became more frequent after the imposition of resolution 1333 (2000). They occurred in a period during which the Taliban frequently articulated complaints against the United Nations and the imposition of sanctions. This sequence of events shows that reactions to sanctions by the Taliban authorities contributed to the operating difficulties of the humanitarian agencies. The decline in respect for humanitarian principles and for humanitarian agencies, however, occurred within a complex political environment. Other factors, such as internal political developments within the Taliban movement and conflicting interpretations by the Taliban of the principles that should underpin humanitarian action, also served to undermine relations between the humanitarian agencies and the Taliban authorities. They must rank alongside the United Nations sanctions as contributory causes to the problems faced by the humanitarian agencies.

C. Civil aviation and transport safety

22. My previous report (S/2001/241) indicated that the aviation restrictions imposed by resolutions 1267 (1999) and 1333 (2000) had presented difficulties for the maintenance of the aircraft fleet of Ariana Afghan Airlines and that this risked compromising aviation safety, including the safety of passengers who travel

domestically on Ariana. The monitoring mechanism was charged with further investigating the issue to examine the precise nature of the constraints on Ariana and to propose mechanisms to overcome the problem of aviation safety.

23. Ariana is operating five Antonov 24 (AN-24) civilian aircraft for its domestic flights. Their recommended maintenance schedule includes a complete overhaul (D-check) after 1,800 flying hours, which would likely be a one-off check for each Antonov aircraft of Ariana's fleet during the lifespan of the current sanctions regime.

24. All five of the AN-24 aircraft were due for D-checks in May 2001. No facilities exist for these extensive overhauls within Afghanistan. Ariana has arrangements to conduct such checks in Karachi, with ZASAF Aviation, at a cost of approximately US\$ 100,000 per plane. It is recommended that the Sanctions Committee consider issuing exemptions for Ariana Airlines to fly each Antonov to Karachi, in rotation, as soon as possible, so as to conduct the required overhauls.

25. The same requirements apply for the three Boeing 727 aircraft operated by Ariana. They need a partial overhaul (C-check) every 12 months and a complete overhaul (D-check) every 15,000 flying hours, which corresponds to one D-check every four to five years.

26. One of the Boeing 727s (YA-FAY) was due for a D-check in May 2001 and another (YA-FAU) is due for the same complete overhaul in July 2001. There are no facilities for these procedures in Afghanistan. However, Ariana has a maintenance arrangement with Royal Jordanian Airlines, in Amman, for this maintenance. The total cost of the procedure is \$4 million per aircraft. These overhauls are only required once for each aircraft during the current sanctions regime. Accordingly, it is proposed that, upon request from Ariana, the Sanctions Committee issue the necessary exemptions.

27. A further obstacle to international flights by Ariana has arisen, which will even constrain the company from availing itself of any Sanctions Committee exemptions. The insurer of Ariana has cancelled the insurance policy of the three Boeing aircraft used for international flights. The insurance broker has cited the United Nations sanctions as the reason for the cancellation of the policy on grounds that the broker could not settle any claims by making

payments to a frozen account. It is therefore recommended that the Sanctions Committee establish regulations with respect to airline insurance.

28. In addition to its maintenance requirements, Ariana also requires access to spare parts and consumables that are not available in Afghanistan, and some of them (including aircraft engines) are recommended to be transported by air. Ariana has previously proposed airlifting of a set of spare parts for its Boeing fleet from Dubai, but it was not issued the needed exemptions for that purpose. During the monitoring process, discussions were held with both Ariana Afghan Airlines and the International Air Transport Association (IATA) to identify a workable mechanism whereby any such requests for spare parts could be certified by IATA to assure that they comply with actual maintenance requirements of the identified civilian Ariana aircraft and thus facilitating the work of the Sanctions Committee in granting exemptions for the air transport of these spare parts. On the basis of these discussions it is proposed that Ariana be advised to route all applications for air transport of spare parts through IATA, which will forward the applications to the Sanctions Committee, with their certification that the spare parts are required for civilian aircraft maintenance.

29. In addition to its physical inventory, Ariana's safe and legal operation also depends on its ability to retain key flight crew members and to ensure that they perform the required number of flight hours. The flight crew, including captains, first officers, flight engineers and flight attendants, are, according to standard operating procedures, obliged to have regular flight simulator training. Therefore, it is recommended that IATA forward the recommended schedule for such training to the Sanctions Committee and that, based on certification by IATA, the Sanctions Committee consider applications from Ariana for flight ban exemptions to allow crew members to attend simulator training abroad.

30. Ariana will only be able to proceed with essential maintenance and crew training if a mechanism can be found to enable the company to finance these activities. Therefore, it is recommended that the Sanctions Committee authorize supervised access to frozen funds for the finance of approved maintenance work and crew training.

D. International trade: imports and exports

31. The sanctions regime has direct implications for Afghanistan's international trade because it has targeted international flights, which were previously used for transporting traded goods. However, the scale of the impact had been limited by the fact that most of Afghanistan's commodity imports and exports were already transported by surface, even before the air restrictions.

32. Total imports to Afghanistan in 2000 were estimated at 1.6 million tons (valued at approximately \$1,211 million). Total exports and re-exports from Afghanistan were estimated at 1.5 million tons (valued at approximately \$1,227 million). In both cases, transit trade dominated the figures. In value terms, 11 per cent of the exports are of indigenous products and 34 per cent of imports are for domestic consumption (World Bank 2001). The Ariana Afghan Airlines freight capacity, up until 1999, when it operated scheduled flights to Amritsar, India, and Dubai, United Arab Emirates, represented approximately 0.3 per cent of the total movement of imports and exports. Therefore, only a small proportion of international trade was transported by air and has thus been affected by the air embargo. In value terms, the percentage may be higher because the air freight service specialized in high value, low bulk goods, but it is unlikely to have been more than 1 per cent of total exports by value in any case.

33. The export of fresh fruit to Dubai is one of the few sectors that are particularly affected by the air restrictions. During 1998 and 1999, Afghan traders supplied fresh fruits to markets in the Gulf, using the airfreight service of Ariana to Dubai. A total of 405 metric tons was exported in the two years prior to the imposition of the aviation restrictions, against an initial investment of \$264,000. The fruits comprised apricots, fresh almonds, pomegranates, grapes, melons and apples. Market analysis and freight capacity indicated that there was potential to expand this trade significantly. However, after imposition of resolution 1267 (1999), the trade was suspended. The loss of the air route has meant that sales are now restricted to the low-price domestic market, which has resulted in a loss of local income and employment.

34. In overall terms, it is clear that the air restrictions have not been a major factor in determining the volume

and direction of Afghanistan's international trade. Nonetheless, the effects that have been noted have been negative, serving to deter trade in goods for which airfreight was the preferable form of transport.

E. Analysis of commodities and exchange markets

35. Monitoring of key commodity markets and exchange rates in the six months after the adoption of resolution 1333 (2000) indicates that the sanctions regime imposed on Afghanistan has not caused any price inflation in basic commodities. The initial rapid depreciation of the Afghan currency against the United States dollar observed between December 2000 and February 2001 and reported in the March review (S/2001/241) was followed by a stabilizing of exchange rates. By the end of the review period, the Afghan currency was above its trend position (it depreciated by 1.4 per cent per month during the period from the end of November 2000 to the end of May 2001, compared to a previous monthly depreciation of 2.8 per cent). The strengthening of the exchange rate from March 2001 (the Afghani recovered 9 per cent of its value against the United States dollar between March and June) is consistent with the analysis presented in my previous report (S/2001/241), which indicated that the fall in the exchange rate in December and January was a once-off market adjustment to the announcement of the adoption and imposition of United Nations sanctions.

36. In summary, the sanctions have not had any long-term adverse effects on the functioning of the main commodities markets in Afghanistan.

F. Investment climate

37. While neither resolution 1267 (1999) nor 1333 (2000) includes measures directly prohibiting investment in Afghanistan, aspects of the sanctions regime may create disincentive to domestic or foreign investment. Possible obstructions to investment identified in the sanctions regime include:

(a) The freezing of Taliban assets has caused suspension of all international banking activities of the Afghan public sector banks and made transfers favouring organs of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan illegal;

(b) The ban on international flights has eliminated commercial freight and passenger connections to Afghanistan, a major obstacle to many international business activities;

(c) The existence of a sanctions regime may affect overall investor confidence because of the expectation of political instability or of further coercive measures.

38. The Private Sector Investment Bureau of the Afghan Ministry of Mines and Industries has registered some 1,015 possible investment projects nationally over the past four years. Of these, 305 have become active. Investors who have withdrawn from projects which were otherwise, ostensibly, proceeding, include:

(a) The oil and gas exploration project of the Greek company Consolidated Constructor Company, in Helmand and Kandahar Provinces;

(b) The rehabilitation of the Herat cement factory;

(c) The expansion of the Pul I Khumri cement factory.

39. The Consolidated Constructor Company project seems to be the clearest example of a viable project abandoned owing to the imposition of United Nations sanctions. It was suspended on 19 January 2001 after the imposition of resolution 1333 (2000). A 17-month preliminary survey had been conducted in the two provinces, with an initial investment of \$1 million. The second phase (seismic survey), planned with an investment of \$12 million over 18 months, was cancelled. The primary reason for the abandonment of the Consolidated Constructor Company project was that the survey depended on the operation of a light aircraft, which the company felt was impossible under the current aviation restrictions. The secondary reason for the abandonment was the anticipated difficulty of retaining international staff in a country under United Nations sanctions without any air links.

40. In the case of the cement factory in Herat, Czech investors had been involved in negotiations regarding rehabilitation and expansion of the plant but withdrew from the negotiations in January 2001, citing the tightening of United Nations sanctions as the main reason.

41. Officials of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan also claimed that they had been involved in discussions

with an investment bank in Dubai to establish a \$500 million investment portfolio for allocation to projects in Afghanistan but that the bank withdrew from the negotiations after the imposition of the United Nations sanctions.

42. Certain investment activities have proceeded. There has been a limited international investment even under the current sanctions regime, especially in telecommunications. However, the investors face numerous hurdles, some of them arising from the sanctions regime. Investors in telecommunications, in particular, have complained of sanctions-related restrictions, including lack of an air freight service for transport of fragile equipment, lack of access to international flights for personnel, difficulty in obtaining export documentation for equipment in countries of origin and the lack of formal facilities for money transfer.

43. There has also been some limited investment from Pakistan businessmen, particularly in minerals development. Local investors have been able to invest in a range of trade and production activities without being deterred by the United Nations sanctions.

44. Even in cases where potential investors cite sanctions as a reason for not investing, the reality may be a complex combination of political-environmental and practical factors related to the sanctions. The United Nations sanctions regime represents one factor in an overall environment that is increasingly discouraging to investors.

G. Afghan banking sector

45. Resolution 1267 (1999) froze overseas assets of the Taliban movement and banned financial transactions with the movement. However, in implementation of the resolution, the freeze has been applied to the entire Afghan public sector, including the Afghan public sector banks. Afghanistan's overseas assets and accounts have been frozen and transactions favouring the Afghan public sector have been banned. In effect, the freezing of assets implemented through resolution 1267 (1999) represents a form of banking embargo on Afghanistan.

46. The direct humanitarian implications of the freezing of Taliban-related bank accounts have been minimal, because confidence in and use of the banks was already low prior to the introduction of sanctions.

Up until 1992, humanitarian agencies relied on the Afghan banks for the transfer of funds to and within the country. During the conflict in the cities from 1992 until 1996, the humanitarian agencies were forced to follow the example of the Afghan private sector and shift to reliance on informal alternative financial service providers. Many assistance agencies retain a base in a neighbouring country, in particular in Pakistan, to support their operations in Afghanistan. This allows them to use the informal financial providers that operate between Pakistan and Afghanistan. The sanctions have consolidated this pattern and effectively ruled out the option of assistance agencies reverting to use of Afghan banks for the transfer of funds to their in-country operations. In effect, maintaining a bank account in a neighbouring country has become a prerequisite for any assistance agency operating in Afghanistan.

47. The Afghan public sector relied on the banks for the settlement of international payment up until the imposition of resolution 1267 (1999). Since then, government departments have either ceased international dealings or switched to the same informal channels used by the private sector, or have switched to using private overseas bank accounts. In this sense the sanctions regime has contributed to the decapitalization of the Afghan banks and has helped to promote undocumented, clandestine or informal sector financial dealings.

H. The armed conflict

48. The findings cited in my previous report (S/2001/241) continue to be valid. Although the sanctions were intended to reduce the flow of arms, the intensity of war shows no signs of diminishing and the conflict continued at a high level during the first six months of 2001. From the time when the sanctions were imposed, the parties to the conflict do not appear to have altered their military stance or their willingness to continue fighting. The only way that the humanitarian situation in Afghanistan can be substantially addressed is if the attitude and ability of the parties to the conflict change and an effective peace process is allowed to proceed. The humanitarian consequences of the conflict have re-confirmed war as the major cause of human suffering in Afghanistan. The ongoing fighting is the main cause for the unprecedented number of internally displaced persons

and the new influx of refugees to Pakistan. All regions of the country, with the exception of the southern region, now include active conflict zones.

I. Availability of essential drugs

49. The ban on international flights to Afghanistan has the potential to reduce availability of essential drugs by cutting off one possible means of importing medicine.

50. A number of pharmaceutical importers and aid agencies were asked whether this had, in fact, occurred. They reported that all supply problems had been addressed by diverting to surface routes. Therefore, there was no evidence that the availability of essential drugs had been affected by the sanctions regime.

51. Drug prices have moved broadly in line with other commodities that were not transported by air. From a representative basket of essential drugs considered, most have experienced a decline in dollar equivalent prices since the imposition of sanctions in 1999 and a moderate rise in Afghani denominated prices. There has been no evidence of different price trends for drugs from different countries of origin. There is also no evidence that sanctions have affected medicine prices, other than an effect they may have exerted through temporary exchange rate movements.

52. Pharmaceutical traders estimated that market shares of medicines retailed in Afghanistan were: medicines from India, 45 per cent; medicines from Pakistan, 25 per cent; and medicines originating in the Islamic Republic of Iran, China and Korea, 30 per cent. Prior to August 1999, one route for import of medicines was via Ariana cargo flights from Amritsar to Kabul. In August of 1999, the Government of India withdrew permission for Ariana flights to Amritsar, and the imposition of resolution 1267 (1999) in November 1999 generalized this decision. However, alternative routes exist for import from India: container by sea to Karachi, and then through Pakistan by road to Afghanistan. The fact that Indian drugs maintain a significant presence on the retail market indicates that traders have been able to switch to supply by surface. Traders complain that the long delays and formalities involved in the surface route have imposed higher costs than when they had the facility of direct import by air.

53. Thus the main burden of the sanctions has been felt in terms of increased administrative costs and difficulties, rather than in a reduction of the medicine supply.

J. Effectiveness of the humanitarian exemptions mechanism

54. The conclusion contained in my previous report (S/2001/241), that humanitarian exemptions were working smoothly and had avoided excessive delays or cancellation of humanitarian activities, remains broadly applicable. The only delays to humanitarian activities that have been noted have arisen from restrictions not anticipated in the sanctions resolutions.

55. Since March 2001, the United Nations Coordinator's Office for Afghanistan has forwarded 47 applications for agency exemption from the flight ban to the Sanctions Committee. A total of three refusals were received, all of them with regard to established Pakistani non-governmental organizations (NGOs) based in Peshawar. The refusal is not thought to have immediate logistical consequences for these agencies because of the alternatives to air transport.

56. A total of 11 consignments of demining equipment were cleared for transport to Afghanistan without refusals or unreasonable delays. Coordination of the demining clearances proved easy since all operational agencies involved in demining work under the umbrella provided by the United Nations Coordinator's Office, which took responsibility for clearances.

57. A series of complaints were received from Pakistani NGOs based in Peshawar and operating cross-border to eastern Afghanistan. They experienced problems with the Pakistani authorities in obtaining clearances for road travel. The Pakistani authorities had notified these NGOs officially that they should apply for Security Council exemptions, although no air travel was intended or requested. The Pakistani authorities appear not to distinguish between clearance for air transport and clearance for transport by road. The persistence of this problem suggests the need for the Sanctions Committee to clarify to the authorities of neighbouring countries the exact scope of their obligations under the United Nations sanctions.

K. The sanctions regime and Afghan society

1. Popular perceptions of sanctions

58. Through interviews conducted in Kabul and surrounding areas, the monitoring process has undertaken an assessment of the extent of popular knowledge, awareness and perceptions with regard to the United Nations sanctions. The findings should be taken as an initial indication of the nature of popular perceptions, subject to the constraints and difficulties of obtaining accurate information in contemporary Afghanistan.

59. Awareness of the United Nations sanctions is high, which apparently reflects the sustained Taliban-led campaign to highlight the measures. The accuracy of people's knowledge with regard to the content of the sanctions measures is also surprisingly high as well, which perhaps reflects the monitoring focus on Kabul to date. Almost everyone was aware of the ban on international flights to Afghanistan and the restrictions on travel by Taliban senior officials. On all other issues there was at least a two-thirds awareness of the nature of the measures (what is and what is not included in the sanctions regime).

60. In terms of the key issue of whether the Afghan population believes there are adverse humanitarian consequences, 83 per cent of the people interviewed believed that sanctions do cause some element of suffering for the Afghans, but only 33 per cent claimed to suffer from such adverse effects themselves.¹ People have little confidence in the ability of sanctions to achieve any political progress.

61. It is noteworthy that 85 per cent of the persons interviewed consider sanctions a source of shame. They feel personally or nationally insulted by the imposition of United Nations sanctions, which contributes to a general sense of international isolation and abandonment.

62. These results indicate that, on one level, the public information initiative in the Taliban-controlled media seems to have been effective in making sure that everyone knows about sanctions and that most expect there to be adverse humanitarian consequences. This contributes to a difficult environment, within which the United Nations, including the humanitarian agencies, must operate.

63. The lack of activity of the United Nations in the domain of public information on sanctions, particularly using media accessible to Afghans, is therefore an issue of concern. In a period during which the Taliban has clearly prioritized projecting information on the sanctions issue, and has directly attacked the neutrality of the United Nations, there are no efforts from the Organization to project and disseminate a United Nations perspective, countering disinformation, or countering sanctions-related attacks on the United Nations.

2. Impact of sanctions on minority communities

64. The Hindu and Sikh communities were identified as a particular vulnerable group. These communities have recently attracted attention over reported plans by the Taliban authorities to enforce the wearing of a distinctive badge. Since 1992, the communities have expressed concerns over their security and that of their property. There is an overall hostile environment in Afghanistan for these communities that is leading to their rapid disappearance. Community leaders reported that the number of Hindu and Sikh families has fallen from 3,000 in 1992, to 570 in 2001. The communities were previously settled in Kabul, Nangarhar, Khost, Ghazni, Kandahar and Kunduz Provinces, but now mostly remain only in Kabul, Jalalabad and Khost.

65. These communities have traditionally maintained strong cultural and commercial links with India, which were largely serviced via the Ariana flights to India, up to August 1999. A high proportion of the Hindus and Sikhs depended for their livelihoods on trading activities with India, in particular medicine imports and dried fruit exports.

66. In view of the special dependence of these communities on the air link to India, the Sanctions Committee should consider clarifying the fact that the exemption on the flight ban for fulfilment of religious obligation, which has hitherto only been invoked for the Muslim Haj, is also open to groups of Hindus and Sikhs wishing to participate in major religious festivals in India. It would then be up to members of these minority communities, through the Taliban Ministry of Religious Affairs, to approach the Sanctions Committee with any specific proposal for pilgrimages to India. The Sanctions Committee could then offer case-by-case exemptions from the flight ban under the existing provision for religious obligations.

L. Conclusions and recommendations

67. The results of the monitoring process indicate that there are adverse humanitarian effects from the current sanctions regime. But these effects are limited, and their scope and magnitude is greatly exceeded by the effects of the other factors causing humanitarian suffering, most notably the unprecedented drought, the continuation of the conflict and the widespread deprivation of human rights.

68. The clearest direct effects of the United Nations sanctions are still on civil aviation, through the reduced ability of the national airline to operate its planes, maintain safety, generate employment and income and render services. A simple technical solution has been developed for certification of requests by Ariana Afghan Airlines for exemptions from the aviation sanctions. This should be implemented immediately to enable the company to address its maintenance problems.

69. There are also some effects for the investment climate in Afghanistan, with sanctions constituting a contributory factor in deterring investors, thus limiting the generation of livelihoods.

70. Humanitarian exemption mechanisms have worked relatively well and agencies have faced no delays or obstacles arising directly out of the sanctions measures. With regard to exemptions of humanitarian agencies from the aviation restrictions, the Sanctions Committee should intervene with the Pakistani authorities to explain the limitations of the air ban and agency exemption procedures, and request them not to make other privileges conditional on being exempted by the United Nations first.

71. With regard to the frozen overseas accounts of Ariana Afghan Airlines, the Sanctions Committee should consider granting supervised access to these assets for approved maintenance work and crew training, in line with the mechanism already established for use of the over-flight revenues.

72. There is extensive public information regarding sanctions available to the Afghan population, most of it originating from Taliban sources, articulating their viewpoint and promoting their idea that there are widespread humanitarian effects from sanctions, something which is believed by most Afghans. There is a clear need for the United Nations to be more proactive in providing public information regarding

sanctions, and ensuring that this is accessible to the Afghan population.

Notes

- ¹ Interviews were conducted in Kabul and surrounding areas, between March and May 2001, across a broad section of social categories: total number of people interviewed, 287.